DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 332 747 JC 910 266

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TITLE Dimensions of Diversity: The Fenway Middle College High School Comes to Bunker Hill Community College.
PUB DATE 18 Apr 91
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (71st, Kansas City, MO, April 13-16, 1991).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Bound Students; College Environment; *College Preparation; *College School Cooperation; Community Colleges; *Cooperative Programs; Dual Enrollment; Educational Attainment; High Schools; *High School Students; Program Design; Program Implementation; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS Bunker Hill Community College MA; *Middle Colleges

ABSTRACT

The "Middle College" concept, first developed at LaGuardia Community College in New York and successfully replicated at 18 other colleges around the country, brings a group of high school students onto a college campus where they receive some or all of their high school education. By exposing students to the college environment, such programs seek to encourage them to attend a community college upon completion of high school. In September 1990, the Fenway Middle College High School opened on the Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC) campus in Boston, becoming the first program of its kind in New England. The decision to initiate the program was based on the fact that Fenway's graduation rate was 88% (28% higher than the Boston city-wide average); that Fenway's existing relationship with Children's' Hospital, allowing students to work in a health care setting, fit nicely with BHCC's health care degree programs; and that both schools had similarly diverse student populations. To encourage acceptance of the program at BHCC, memos were distributed, and faculty and staff were invited to the program opening to meet the Fenway teachers. In addition, a task force was established bringing together teachers and staff from both schools. To implement the program, BHCC provided office and classroom space, access to college services, and limited enrollment in college-level courses. Financed by the Boston Public School System, the program began with 150 high school students. Accomplishments in the first year included a joint mentoring and tutoring program and a teach-in on the Persian Gulf crisis. A currently enrolled Fenway student's perspective suggests that the program has the potential to instill a sense of freedom and responsibility in participants. (PAA)

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Paper presented at the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges 71st Annual Convention
Kansas City, Missouri
April 13-16, 1991

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AACJC CONFERENCE, April 18, 1991

WHAT IS THE FENWAY MIDDLE COLLEGE?

The Middle College concept is based on a model first developed at LaQuardia Community College in Long Island City, New York. That model, now successfully replicated at 18 other colleges around the country, features the bringing of a group of high school students onto the college campus, where they receive some or all of their high school education. Hence the name Middle College, referring to the middle ground between the high school environment and the college

environment. Through a Middle College, high school students are introduced to college life and hopefully are enticed by that environment to remain through high school graduation and into the community college higher educational experience.

WHY GO WITH FENWAY?

Approximately two years ago Bunker Hill Community College began to discuss the possibility of bringing on campus the Fenway Program and forming the first Middle College High School in New England. Through the President's office and expanding into other offices, numerous discussions were held, all revolving around the question "should we go with Fenway, and if so, why?" When the

decision was reached, it was reached for several good reasons. Among them: first the record of Fenway Program successes. Despite enrollment of high risk, usually over high-aged students, the Fenway Program had a high school graduation rate of 88%, a full 28 percentage points above that of the city-wide graduation rate of only 60%. Secondly, one of the Fenway emphases is its collaboration with Childrens' Hospital, which provides the high school students with work experience in the health care setting. This activity fit with our own very active series of health care degree programs all with internships that Bunker Hill Community College offers. A third reason was the shared goal of emphasizing the value of life-long learning, through high school and into college, which Bunker Hill Community College and Fenway held in common. Finally, there is the goal of diversity. The profile

of the Fenway pupil was quite diverse ethnically, a perfect match for Bunker Hill Community College, which boasts 41% minority students among its enrollment. That so, the decision was made, and in September 1990 the Fenway High School Program opened on the campus of the Bunker Hill Community College and became the Fenway Middle College High School.

And just what is it that Bunker Hill Community College agreed to do? We agreed to allow the high school program to open and operate on our campus, assigning a limited amount of office and classroom space to the program while modular buildings were being constructed. Next, we agreed to provide access to appropriate college services and activities to the Fenway students. Further, we agreed to offer, on a space available basis, enrollment in college-level

courses to provide Fenway pupils, and finally we agreed to work further on a continuing basis as much as possible to meet our mutual goal of encouraging high school graduation and continuation into the challenges of college.

And how did we manage to have the college community as a whole accept this change? We all know the college communities, although outstanding in some areas, are not necessarily at their best when it comes to accepting change. Remember, this innovation was set against a backdrop of budget cuts for community colleges throughout Massachusetts, and faculty and staff in general were suspicious of anything new. The primary strategy that we used was involvement and communication. Memos were written to the entire college community, addressing major issues such as where the money for the Fenway Program was

coming from, who will teach these high school pupils, and how many of them there be. Just for your information the money for the high school program came from the Boston Pubic School System. The teachers are high school teachers and we began with just under 150 high school pupils coming on board with our own college enrollment of approximately 6,500. Now, in addition to the distribution of memos and articles in the College Newspaper and so forth and so on, we also utilized strategies of involvement. For example, I invited all of the Fenway faculty and staff to our opening faculty meeting near Labor Day last year. At that meeting I introduced all of them to our faculty and staff and then gave the Fenway people an opportunity to make a presentation to that entire audience. A second effective strategy, which continues today, is the Fenway Task Force, the members of

which include Fenway teachers and staff, as well as Bunker Hill Community College faculty and personnel. The intention here is two-fold: to anticipate and to address issues that arise but secondly and perhaps even more importantly, to help the two groups of professionals to get to know one another better as time goes along solidifying the institutionalizing of the Fenway Middle College High School Program at Bunker Hill Community College.

So over the weeks and months we worked out the issues: How to provide Fenway Middle College High School pupils with their mandatory school lunches. Policies and procedures regarding discipline, college course enrollments, student activities, and the like. Then let's not forget the two most important issues at any college campus -- parking and telephones. Well one by one all of these were worked out.

And now we approach the first of the academic year and are able to look at what we have done together in this project, which in many ways, is the epitome of college collaboration. Some of our accomplishments include a joint mentoring and tutoring program, a very successful teach-in on the Persian Gulf crisis, Fenway Middle College High School participation in Bunker Hill Community College activities, such as Student Government, Learning Center, Library, the College Assessment and Placement Testing Program, Student Clubs, College Cultural Events such as the Lecture series, Art Gallery Series, and Concert Series, and others. But perhaps the best indicator of the success of the program is in the words of a Fenway Middle College pupil herself, who wrote an article expressing her perspective. Part of her article reads: On our old school grounds at English

High School, we had to follow a lot of strict rules and regulations, but here on the college campus, we have a lot more freedom. There are many more students who are now excited about learning and being at the Fenway because we are on a college campus scene. The students are given feeling of freedom and of responsibility. Students are treated like adults and that makes us feel more responsible for our own actions. We feel like college students, and that will certainly help us when we actually begin college in the future.

A big part of our program is getting students to think about continuing their education. We are able to take college courses such as Spanish, Computer Programming, and Advanced Math, and the Fenway students are able to see what college life is really like. It makes us believe that we can do it too.

On behalf of the Fenway students, I would like to say thank you to the Bunker Hill Community College staff and students for accepting Fenway onto their campus. Together, the Bunker Hill staff and students, and the Fenway staff and students will make this project a success.

And that's all I've got to say because I think that says it all. Thank you very much for listening and now I turn the program over to our people from the Fenway Middle College High School, beginning with Dr. Larry Myatt who is the Director of the Fenway Program.

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges JUL 5 1991